

Inkjet and Toner Cartridges – Updated August, 2014



Printer cartridges are made from high quality plastic. If they are placed into the recycling stream, they can almost always have their life extended. Depending on their condition, a used cartridge will be refilled, refurbished, or recycled. The determination of what happens to each cartridge is made after they are individually inspected and cleaned by the factory.

Refilled cartridges are those in good enough condition that the manufacturer merely needs to clean the unit and supply it with new toner. Some stores such as Costco provide this service for some brands of cartridges. You can also purchase do-it-yourself refill kits online at sites such as www.123inkjets.com. However, cartridges cannot be refilled indefinitely before the quality of printing is reduced.

A refurbished cartridge means that the factory has to repair a unit, possibly using parts taken from other cartridges.

A recycled cartridge means that the unit is made from plastic which has been shredded, melted and pelletized. Making a cartridge from recycled material saves about 80% of the energy used to make the same item from virgin stock, and of course results in no new oil being used. About 25% of all cartridges made around the world are made from recycled stock.

The plastic is of high enough quality that programs that collect cartridges can earn money from this activity. The county's recycling program collects toner and ink cartridges from the public at two locations: 1) the Community Development Department in the Government Center, 1101 Carmichael Road, Hudson, and 2) the Agricultural Resource and Education Center, 1960 8th Ave, Baldwin.

Revenue earned from selling the cartridges is used to support the county's Environmental Education Fund.

Did You Know?

It takes almost one gallon of oil to make the plastic that goes into the typical toner cartridge used in laser printers, fax machines and copiers. Currently, 375 million cartridges are thrown away annually in the United States. The math is simple – this means that as a society we are throwing away the equivalent of 375 million gallons of oil.

Computer modeling shows that it takes between 450 to 1000 years for this type of plastic to degrade in a landfill.